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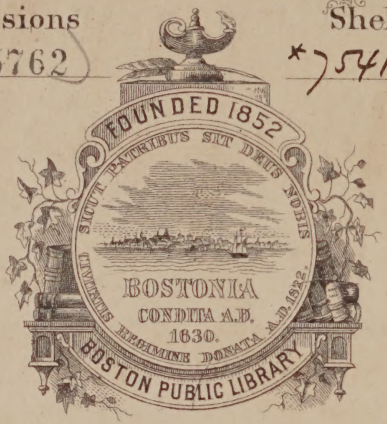

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A

SERMON,

PREACHED AT

WESTMINSTER, (Mass.) FEBRUARY 22, 1815,

AT THE

ORDINATION OF REV. CYRUS MANN,

COLLEAGUE PASTOR WITH REV. ASAPH RICE.

BY ELISHA ROCKWOOD, A. M.
Pastor of the Church in Westborough.

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SERMON.

Solemn and deeply interesting is the occasion upon which we are assembled. A fellow-mortal is this day to be invested with the Pastoral office, and intrusted with the care of souls.

When I behold the crowded assembly, and consider the momentous consequences of this day's solemnities, I cannot but regret, that the part allotted to me, had not been assigned to one more able and more experienced in the word of life. With much diffidence do I stand in the presence of my reverend Fathers, and in the place of one,* who was expected to address you on this occasion. But may I not hope for the silent indulgence and candid attention of this respected audience, while I speak from those words of inspiration, which stand recorded in Heb. xiii, 17, middle clause.

——*They watch for your souls, as they that must give account.*——

Reference is here had to the ministers of the Gospel, and their duty is brought to view. They are placed as guardians of the souls of men.

Let us consider the nature and design of their office, the qualifications requisite, and the considerations which should excite their fidelity.

I. The nature and design of the ministerial office.

Those who are ordained to the work of the ministry, labor in God's moral kingdom. Their commis-

* Rev. Mr. Brown of North Yarmouth.

sion is from on high. Their work peculiarly concerns the glory of God, and the happiness of men. The effects of their labor extend beyond the narrow bounds of time, and strike deep into eternity. Through their instrumentality, the King of kings and Lord of lords, is building a kingdom to himself, a kingdom of righteousness and peace; one, to which the kingdoms of nature and providence, and all the civil kingdoms of this world, are subordinate. He is erecting a temple, which shall be an everlasting monument of his grace. The materials, of which this temple is to be built, are found in a crude state, unfit for the noble edifice. They are to be rough-hewn and polished, before they can be received into the building. To this service ministers are appointed. They are workers together with God. The apostate race of Adam constitute the materials which, through their instrumentality, are to be prepared and made ready for the wise Master-builder. To drop the figure—ministers are ambassadors for God, sent to treat with their fellow men upon the concerns of eternity, and bring them to his kingdom of glory. They watch for souls.

The expression implies, that souls are in danger. Yes, my hearers, it is a truth not to be concealed. In consequence of the apostacy, the many millions of Adam's posterity come into the world, polluted with sin, and under the sentence of condemnation. For, *As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. They go astray as soon as they are born. Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart is only evil continually. The carnal mind is enmity against God, is not subject to his law,*

neither indeed can be. They that are in the flesh cannot please God, being dead in trespasses and sins. Therefore, *Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

Such is the deplorable state of sin and imbecility, in which the Scriptures of truth represent the world of mankind. And dying thus, they must sink down into everlasting perdition, *where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.*

To recover them from this state of ruin and opposition to God, the ministry of reconciliation was instituted. The way having been prepared by the sufferings and death of the blessed Emmanuel, ministers were appointed to beseech sinners in his name and stead, to become reconciled to God. How far, then, does their office surpass, in the importance of its object, every other office sustained by mortals! They are ambassadors for Christ, sent to negociate peace between God and men, and promote intercourse between heaven and earth.

The way in which they are to do this, is, by making a fair exhibition of the character of God, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; of the spirituality and strict requirements of his holy law and its awful sanctions—by faithfully exhibiting to men their vile characters as transgressors of this law, and enemies to God by wicked works—by pointing them to the remedy, which is provided, *the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world*—by disclosing to them the reasonable terms, on which pardon and reconciliation may be obtained—by presenting them suitable arguments and motives; such as may be drawn from the word of God, life and death, heaven and hell—by showing them their dependance upon the free and sovereign grace of God, *who works in them to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

In this way, by instructions and admonitions, by warnings and exhortations, and by constantly bearing them on their hearts at the throne of grace, are they to *watch* for the souls of men. How dignified is their office! How benevolent its object! It aims at the glory of God and the salvation of men.

It will readily be perceived, that for a work of such magnitude and importance, some peculiar qualifications are requisite. Not every one can fill the office of a civil magistrate; not every one is qualified for an ambassador to a foreign court; much less is every one suitable to be employed as an ambassador of the Prince of peace, to take the watch of precious souls. Let us, therefore, consider,

II. Some of the peculiar qualifications requisite for the office of a spiritual watchman.

The *first* and most essential is a *heart* right with God and devoted to his work.

Ill, indeed, must he be qualified to negociate peace, who is himself in a state of enmity and rebellion. Unreconciled himself, what interest would he feel in reconciling others? If he have not been brought by divine grace to see the plague of his own heart, to relinquish his controversy with the Almighty, and to accept of the salvation freely offered in the gospel, it cannot be expected, that he will feel the weight of eternal things, that his mind will be impressed with the worth of souls, that he will feel much solicitude for their welfare, or be very vigilant in guarding them against the evils, to which they are exposed. Would it be prudent, or consistent, to set the wolf to guard the sheep? Equally so, to set one, whose heart is not right with God, to watch for souls. This would be setting the blind to lead the blind; and you need not be told the consequences.

Reconciliation to God, however, is not all that is requisite. This, indeed, would secure his own salvation, but it is not sufficient to place him in such an important office. He must be devoted to the work of the ministry. This should engage his affections, occupy his thoughts, and call forth his energies. He must delight in the work; and, like his divine Master, consider it his meat and his drink to do the will of Him that sent him.

A heart, thus devoted to God and the work of the ministry, will fortify one against temptations and discouragements, and enable him to surmount obstacles, which would otherwise prove too formidable. If, like Paul, he be willing to spend and be spent, for the cause of Christ, he will not be diverted from the duties of his office, by the frowns or the flatteries of the world. Discouragements will rather increase, than abate, his exertions to promote the good of souls.

This entire devotion to his work will prevent him from being entangled with the affairs of this world. It will render him attentive to the state of his flock, that he may the better adapt his instructions, warnings, and exhortations to their respective characters and circumstances. This will also render him diligent in his researches after truth, that he may "feed them with knowledge and understanding." Indeed, almost every thing, under Providence, depends upon his feeling the spirit of his office, and his undertaking it with right motives; not with sinister designs, not for the sake of distinction, or any worldly advantage; *not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind;* the glory of God and the good of souls overpowering every other consideration.

2. He, who watches for souls, should possess a teachable temper.

He has to learn his duty from the inspired volume, that which the Holy Ghost teacheth. Here he must sit, as at the feet of Jesus, and in meekness receive the word of truth. However eminent may be his talents, or extensive his erudition, he is not to be wise above that which is written; but must humbly and prayerfully consult the sacred oracles, that he may know what the will of the Lord is. For, if he do not speak according to them, there is no light in him. He must not be so partial to his own ideas, or to any preconceived opinion, as to be unyielding to the testimony of God, which standeth sure.

As the Scriptures contain the only terms upon which sinners can become reconciled to God, and as they point out the path of duty, for both the watchman and his flock, so it is of the highest importance, that he attentively peruse them, cordially embracing the several doctrines they inculcate, and rendering his instructions conformable to them. He is not to embrace some, and reject others; for the several parts form one perfect whole. And *all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.*

If, then, he would teach others, he must himself submit to be taught of God. He must, indeed, be willing to receive truth, let it come from what source it may And often may he derive some useful hints from the most illiterate of his charge.

3. Ability to instruct is an essential qualification for a christian minister.

He should not only possess a discriminating mind, so as carefully to distinguish between truth and error; but he should have a fund of knowledge, and be *apt*

to teach. Hence he must give himself to reading and meditation. While he makes the Bible his main study, the whole circle of arts and sciences may be of use to him, in investigating and applying divine truth.

The Scriptures being originally written in different languages, and the sense being often obscured by our translation, renders necessary an acquaintance with the original tongues. Also their being written in different periods of the world, while the manners and customs of men were continually changing, renders a knowledge of ancient history truly desirable, that the beauty, harmony, and force of divine truth, may the more fully appear.

Moreover, as a minister must have intercourse with all descriptions of men, so he needs to have a knowledge of human nature, as displayed in active life, that he may know how to speak a word in season. How can he innocently become all things to all men, as did the apostle, unless he have an extensive knowledge of the dispositions and habits of men?

Must not those be ignorant of the arduous duties and difficulties of the christian ministry, who consider grace in the heart, or divine illuminations, as superseding the necessity of human literature? I will not undertake to say, how extensive should be a preacher's erudition. Here, as in other things, circumstances may alter cases; but of this we are assured, he should not be a novice; lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Will it be said, 'The apostles were generally illiterate fishermen?' True, they once were. But they were likewise three years in the school of Christ; and besides this, were miraculously indued with the gift of tongues, a knowledge of various languages. It, therefore, hardly becomes any to plead the example of the apostles, as justifying an ignorant ministry, un-

less they can furnish apostolical evidence of their being supernaturally taught of God, and thus qualified for the sacred office.

But who has not been convinced of the utility of adapting instruction to the subjects, to time and circumstances, and of using different modes of address according to the different views, feelings, and prejudices of men? Yet how can a preacher do this, unless he have a general acquaintance with men and books?

How arduous is the task of dislodging prejudice from the mind; how difficult the work of expelling error from the corrupt heart, and of exciting the attention of stupid mortals to the word of life! Yet, till this is done, preaching will be like *running upon a rock with horses, or ploughing there with oxen.*

How numerous are the errors which a minister has to combat! What subtilty is employed to undermine the cross of Christ! How many gainsay the word of truth, *whose mouths must be stopped!*

By unskilfully handling the word, the preacher may raise up an enemy to fight against it; he may confirm the infidel in his delusion; he may lead the inquirer to settle down upon a false hope, and even bewilder and perplex the true believer. Is it not, then, requisite, that he have a comprehensive view of truth, that he may be able to exhibit it in a plain, connected, consistent manner? That he should know how to interest the attention, to convince the understanding, and to affect the heart?—How many are the occasions which will call for the wisdom of the serpent, as well as the innocence of the dove!

4. I observe once more, that a blameless character, an exemplary life, is an essential qualification for a christian teacher.

Says the apostle, *A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre.*

However orthodox may be his creed, or well wrought his sermons; however eloquent and impressive may be his manner of preaching, if the general tenor of his life be contrary to the gospel, little good can be expected from his ministry.

It is an adage, no less true than trite, that "Example speaks louder than words." This applies with double force to a minister of the gospel. If his people perceive, that the truths which he delivers, have little or no influence upon his own heart and life, they will not be influenced by them. And they will attempt to justify their impenitence and ungodliness by his miscarriages. Moreover, if he be not circumspect in his conduct, his private life, he will probably be unfaithful in his public discourses. With what reluctance will he reprove the errors of others, whose conscience whispers to him, 'Thou dost the same things thyself,' and he hears it again and again reechoed by his people!

A minister should not only be blameless, but he should be an *example to others, in word, in conversation, in spirit, in charity, in faith, in purity.* His whole deportment should manifest that he feels the weight of divine things. In all his intercourse with his people, should he bear in mind, that he is an ambassador of the Prince of peace; and his life should be a practical illustration of his sermons.

Such are some of the most important qualifications of a minister of the gospel, one who *watches for souls.* And these necessarily imply, that he be a man of prayer. We notice,

III. A few considerations, calculated to excite his fidelity.

1. The divine honor and glory are concerned.

He, who is duly qualified and properly inducted into the ministerial office, bears the message of God to men. He comes to negociate peace, and produce reconciliation between the King of kings and his revolted subjects. And as he, who is sent on an embassy to a foreign court, is bound to consult the honor and interest of his government, so an ambassador from God should remember that the honor of his Lord is involved in his embassy.

If he do not give a faithful representation of the character of his sovereign, of the nature of his government, of the requisitions and spirituality of his holy law, and of the terms, on which pardon and reconciliation may be obtained, he brings dishonor upon his divine Lord. If he *shun to declare the whole counsel of God*, or attempt to accommodate it to the corrupt inclinations of men, he departs from the simplicity of the gospel, and endangers the souls committed to his care. Though God will glorify his justice in the final destruction of the wicked, (for the wrath of man shall praise him) yet it is in the salvation of the righteous that his mercy shines most gloriously. He appears in his glory when Zion is built up. The wonderful scheme of salvation was designed for a most illustrious display of the divine glory, and the more fully this is carried into effect, the more honor accrues to the Majesty of heaven. And ministers being employed to carry on the work, the more faithful they are, the more will the divine glory be promoted. And how can one, who has tasted and seen that the Lord is gracious, be indifferent to his glory! God is glorified, when sinners repent and bring forth the fruits of righteousness.

Says Christ to his disciples, *Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.* Should not this consideration stimulate the fidelity of a pious minister, and render him indefatigable in his exertions to bring sinners to God, and render them fruitful in good works? How must he rejoice to be instrumental in satisfying the soul of the benevolent Jesus, who laid down his life a ransom for us! When he sees how much God himself has done to prepare the way and effect the salvation of sinners, can he be willing that the end should in any instance fail of being accomplished, and the grace of God be frustrated, through his neglect? Must he not esteem it an unspeakable felicity to be the means of adding one voice to the countless millions, that will be eternally employed in celebrating the praises of redeeming love?

2. Another consideration, which should excite ministerial fidelity, is, the interests of immortal souls are involved.

Though the rich treasure of the gospel is committed to earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us, yet the success of this gospel depends in no small degree, upon the fidelity of those, to whom the dispensation of it is committed. And of all the frowns of Providence upon a people, perhaps none involves more awful consequences, than the settlement of an ungodly, unfaithful minister. To his care is committed, not the word of life only, but the souls of men. For them he is to watch; for their good he must labor. He is not only to watch and guard them from falling into the snares of the devil, but seeing them already fallen, he is to seek their deliverance.

Can a minister, who knows the terrors of the Lord, unless he have a heart of adamant, see the dear ob-

jects of his charge suspended over the gulf of endless despair, every moment liable to be plunged in, and not exert himself for their salvation? Shall he not be faithful to warn, reprove, and rebuke with long-suffering? Shall he not shew them their danger, the entire depravity of their hearts, the requisitions of God's law, the awful consequences of disobedience, and the atonement of Christ, as the only way of escape? Shall he not collect arguments and motives from the word, from heaven, earth, and hell; and present them with all the energy and persuasive eloquence, of which he is master, that he "may by all means save some?" Shall he not be instant in season and out of season, improving every opportunity to enforce divine truth, and render men attentive to the concerns of their souls? When he considers what a hell of interminable torments lies before them, and what a heaven of happiness may be obtained, can he want arguments to call forth all his energies in their behalf? When he considers, moreover, not only the native depravity of the heart, which, of itself, is sufficient to destroy every soul, but also the numerous temptations and sinful allurements, with which his people are surrounded, and the wiles and fiery darts of the adversary, to which the righteous, as well as the wicked, are exposed, must he not be solicitous to furnish them with the whole armor of God?

3. Another consideration, which should ever lie with weight upon the mind of a minister, and excite fidelity, is his responsibility.

To God must he give account of the manner, in which he discharges the duties of his all important office. Every christian minister may consider the language of Jehovah to Ezekiel, as addressed to him: Son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the

house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak, to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; *but his blood will I require at thy hand.*

Every man is, indeed, responsible to God for all his conduct; but a minister is peculiarly so. He speaks to his fellow mortals in the name of God, and is in danger of having their blood required at his hands. He is obliged implicitly to follow the directions of his Lord, to receive the word at his mouth, and unequivocally to declare all the doctrines and duties, warnings and encouragements, threatenings and promises of the gospel. In determining what doctrines and precepts to inculcate, he is not to confer with flesh and blood, but meekly to inquire, *What saith the Holy Ghost?*

However unpopular or offensive to men may be the humbling doctrines of the cross, it is at his peril that he neglects to exhibit them. Can he who feels his high responsibility, be willing to entertain his hearers with vain speculations, or with only those cold moral precepts, which are not inconsistent with the carnal mind? Can he stoop to accommodate his instructions to the views and feelings of the corrupt heart? If he study to please men, he cannot be the servant of Christ. Will he attempt to conceal from the wicked their real character and awful danger; or to build up Zion with rotten stones? Alas, if he be not faithful, to warn the wicked, their blood will be required at his hands! Solemn, affecting consideration! And yet have we not reason to fear, that many, very many, precious souls sink down to perdition, through the unfaithfulness of their teachers. They are held in ignorance and fatal security, till summoned to the eternal world.

Think, for a moment, what must be the confusion and anguish of an unfaithful minister, when brought before the tribunal of Jehovah, to give an account of his stewardship! There he meets immortal souls that had been committed to his care, and were lost through his neglect. With stern indignation the righteous Judge fixes his eye upon him, saying, 'To save these precious souls, I gave my life a ransom; to thy charge I consigned them, but thou hast been unfaithful, they are consequently destroyed. Their blood will I now require at thy hands—Depart, depart with them, thou cursed, into everlasting fire.' O wretched, doleful state!—There must he endure a tenfold wrath of God, and the eternal reproaches of the souls he had helped to destroy!

But is a minister faithful, not shunning to declare the whole counsel of God, and to warn the wicked—then is he a *sweet savor unto God, both in them that are saved, and in them that perish.*

Having finished his work, he appears before the judgment-seat of Christ, where, arrayed in robes of righteousness, many hail him as the favored instrument of their conversion, and helper of their joy. They testify to his fidelity; he hears from the lips of the blessed Jesus the grateful sentence, *Well done good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.* Who must not wish to be thus approved by the great Head of the church?

We see, by the subject before us, what an important part ministers act in the work of reconciliation. As in the natural, so in the moral, world, God is pleased to employ instrumental agency in accomplishing his purposes. Is the tiller's care requisite to bring

forward the choice fruits of the earth? so is the *faithful preaching* of the word necessary to give it effect upon the souls of men, and prepare them for the kingdom of glory. And though neither would prosper without a divine blessing, yet the use of means is as essential in one case, as in the other. And faithful ministers are, in a peculiar sense, *workers together with God.* They take of the things of God, and shew them to men. And as one soul is of more value than all the treasures of the earth, so he, who watches for souls, acts a most important part. Never can we sufficiently admire the wisdom and condescension of our God, in consigning to men such a dignified and important office.

Even angels rejoiced to be heralds of the glad tidings, which we are commissioned to declare. And the Son of God himself came into the world, not to be ministered unto, but to minister. He spent his invaluable life in testifying to the grace of God, and sealed the testimony with his blood.

May we, my reverend Fathers and Brethren, ever realize on what high ground we stand, nor dare to hold the truth in unrighteousness, or to handle the word of God deceitfully, lest the blood of souls be found in our skirts. By the love of God to a perishing world, by the love we bear to our divine Lord, by the tender regard we have for our fellow men, by the high estimate which we place upon our own souls, and by the solemn account we must hereafter give, let us be excited to fidelity in our Master's work; then shall we become kings and priests to God in a better world.

Again. This subject leads us to reflect upon the cruel unreasonableness of those, who, by their frowns or flatteries, would tempt ministers to be unfaithful.

Rather than have their consciences disturbed by the word of truth, they would induce their teachers to dishonor God, to destroy their own souls, and the souls of their hearers. But why are the wicked so generally pleased with fidelity in every other character, and so displeased with it in ministers? Their servants, mechanics, physicians, attorneys, and civil rulers, they would have faithful; but their ministers, to whom is committed the care of their souls, they would have unfaithful. Their language is, *Prophecy smooth things unto us; yea, prophecy deceits.* Let not the terrors of the Lord be proclaimed in our ears! How unreasonable, how cruel! And it is matter of lamentation that so many, in every age, hearken to their voice, pollute the sanctuary, and render the grace of God of none effect. It should, however, be remembered, that though, for the sake of human applause, preachers betray their trust, and misrepresent the word of life and the character of men, yet the counsel of the Lord will stand; and the wicked shall not go unpunished. And, O, how aggravated must be the doom of those who choose to be deluded, who prefer a lie to the truth of God!

Other reflections are naturally suggested by the subject; but time requires that I pass to the addresses, usual on such occasions.

First to the Pastor Elect.

Dear Brother,

Believing you possessed of the most essential qualifications of a gospel minister, that you have seriously and prayerfully considered the nature, duties, and responsibility of the office, this venerable Council are ready to comply with your request, and the request of this Christian Society, to separate you to the important work. Though no new ideas have probably been

suggested to you by this discourse, yet considerations, deeply interesting and awfully solemn, must now possess your mind. Precious souls, for whom Christ shed his blood, are about to be committed to your particular watch. At your hand will they be required. Already, I doubt not, do you feel a tender solicitude to present them faultless before the bar of God. You now reciprocate their warm attachment, and long for them in the Lord.

Are they kind in administering to your temporal wants? do you repay that kindness, by administering to their spiritual necessities, and watching more assiduously for their souls. Should their attachment unfortunately abate, or be succeeded by unkindness, measure not your fidelity by theirs, but with redoubled exertions endeavor to win them to Christ, and this will the most effectually attach them to you.

You are entering into the labors of one, who has long been in the vineyard, by whose experience you may profit, and to whom you may yet repair for advice. And though your duties may not be diminished by his active exertions, they may be rendered more easy and efficacious, by his counsels and prayers. You will, however, call no man master; for one is your master, even Christ. Trials and difficulties you will naturally expect, for they are inseparable from this frail state. And the times, upon which we have fallen, are peculiarly calculated to try the faith and patience of ministers. An infidel, demoralizing spirit is abroad in the earth; and some who were set for the defence of the gospel have fallen before it. That you may contend earnestly for the faith, be valiant in fight, and play the man for God, bear in mind the dignity of your office, the worth of souls, and the solemn account you must hereafter render.

Behold these sheep and lambs of Christ's flock! Feed them with the sincere milk of the word. Regard them as dying creatures; and consider that soon your opportunities to impart to them the bread of life will be gone forever. Should you be spared to the age of man, you will probably be called to follow most of your congregation to the grave. May you be so faithful to them while living, as that, in the hour of their dissolution, you may have no bitter reflections, let them leave the world with what characters, and under what circumstances they may. Let your preaching be of the discriminating kind, and addressed to the heart and conscience, as well as to the understanding. If you would promote the salvation of souls, and rid your garments of their blood, do not feel afraid of disturbing the guilty conscience. *Be not dismayed at their faces, lest you be confounded before them.* Deal not in such general or equivocal terms, as will lead your hearers to imagine they are all, only with some inequalities, travelling the way to heaven. For our Savior has said, "strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, and *few* there be that find it." Carefully discriminate between the precious and the vile. Deal tenderly, but faithfully. You will remember that there are two characters, which, though not always externally distinguishable, are inwardly as opposite as light and darkness. While you endeavor to expose all the secret lurking places of sin, bring to full view the free grace and boundless mercy of God. In all your sermons and prayers, exhibit Christ as the only foundation of hope. Let your manner of life, and all your intercourse with your people, whether in the social circle, with the afflicted, or in the chamber of the sick and dying, convince them that you make their joys and sorrows your own, and especially, that the inter-

ests of their souls lie near your heart. Let them, let your closet, and the ear of heaven, witness, that *you travail in birth of them, till Christ be formed in them the hope of glory.*

If discouragements arise, remember the work is the Lord's; do your duty, and leave events with him. If at any time ready to sink beneath the weight of responsibility, look to Him, who hath said, *Lo, I am with you alway!—My grace is sufficient for you.* Be much in prayer, for without God you can do nothing. Stand in your lot, my Brother,—diligently watch for the souls committed to your care. May your ministry be long, successful, and happy; and, having *turned many to righteousness, may you shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars, forever and ever.*

BRETHREN AND FRIENDS OF THIS CHURCH AND CHRISTIAN SOCIETY.

WE congratulate you on the pleasing prospects which this day brings to your view. After a season of anxious solicitude and disappointment, you behold the man of your choice, approved by this venerable council, presenting himself to take the oversight of you in the Lord. Gratefully acknowledge the goodness of God, in thus sending an under shepherd to feed and guide you, while your aged Pastor is suffered to remain. We trust he will *watch for your souls, as one who must give account.* His watchfulness, however, will not supersede the necessity of your own. Take heed, therefore, both *what* and *how* you hear. His fidelity will rid his own garments of blood, but it will not save you, unless you are faithful to yourselves. But the more faithful he is, to warn, exhort, and reprove, the more criminality will attach to you, should he be disregarded.

While by your liberality he is enabled to devote himself wholly to his work, without entangling himself with the affairs of this world, let him be among you without fear. Let not his fidelity and plain dealing excite murmurs, and tempt him to *prophecy smooth things unto you*, for in doing this, he would endanger both your souls and his own. Suffer him to use the most heart searching, sin-condemning, and God-exalting language, of which he is capable.

Diligently attend on his ministrations. Give him the advantage of a full assembly, to call forth all his fire and powers of eloquence. But think it not enough, that you patiently hear—let the truth sink deep into your hearts, and produce a governing influence on your lives. Give him the unspeakable felicity of seeing that he labors not in vain. Remember your souls are at stake, and much depends on you, whether the word shall prove a *savor of life unto life*, or *of death unto death*. Bear in mind the solemn account, which you must hereafter give, *how you have heard*. Be fervent in your supplications, that his labors may be blessed abundantly to you and your offspring.

When you consider the importance and high responsibility of his office, need you be exhorted to bear him continually upon your hearts at the throne of celestial grace, that he may be found faithful, and save his own soul, and those that hear him. Esteem him highly in love for his work sake. And by continued kindness to your Senior Pastor, who has long watched for your souls, give the Junior some pledges, that his hoary head will not be despised, that your affections will not decline, with his declining vigor.

Finally, Brethren, live in peace, and the God of love and peace be with you.

A word to this numerous assembly, and I close.

Friends and Fellow Mortals,

The ministry of reconciliation involves consequences deeply interesting to you all. Will you not all feel the importance of maintaining it in its purity, and of obeying them that have the rule over you? Reject the gospel, and you destroy your souls; receive and obey its precepts, and you shall live forever.

Let this day's solemnity bring to your mind a more solemn, august day, when not only this Pastor and his flock, but all the ministers of the gospel, with their numerous congregations, yea, the whole universe of rational creatures, will be assembled before the bar of God, to give an account of all the deeds done here in the body. For we must all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and personally answer to him. Then none will be mere spectators, but all will be actors, and deeply interested in the solemn scene.

It will then appear how *we* have preached, and *you* have heard. A day of grace is now enjoyed; but it will soon be past; the sun will set to rise no more. The night will come wherein no man can work. Will you not then be engaged to work out your salvation, relying on Him, who must work in you to will and to do of his good pleasure? Heaven and hell hang suspended on the improvement of the passing moments. Never, probably, never shall we all meet again, till the last trump shall awake our sleeping dust, and summon us before the Judge of quick and dead. Then, O then, may he say to us, *Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.* Amen.

THE CHARGE,

BY THE REV. JOHN CUSHING, OF ASHBURNHAM.

THE Lord Jesus Christ, after having accomplished the work for which He came into the world, having finished transgression and made an end of sin by his death on the cross, arose from the dead and thereby declared Himself to be the Son of God with power; and for his humiliation, God hath highly exalted Him.—To Him all power in heaven and earth is given, and He is made Head over all things unto the Church.

When He ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men, some Apostles; and some Prophets; and some Evangelists; and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; and has promised to protect and defend his Church, and said, Lo! I am with you (his disciples and their successors) always, even to the end of the world. And this promise has hitherto been made good, and will be; for there has been a succession of Pastors unto this day.

Christ's ministers are not suffered to continue by reason of death; but when they are removed by it, or taken off from their labors by diseases, the great Head of the Church takes care that their places shall be filled by others.

As this church and society, in the course of God's holy providence, have been deprived of the labors of their venerable pastor, who has long broken the bread

of life unto them (it being the 50th year since his ordination,) they have not been contented to remain destitute of the stated ministry of the Gospel, (for which they are highly to be commended,) but have united in the choice of Mr. Cyrus Mann to be their spiritual watchman and Colleague Pastor with the Rev. Mr. Rice; and as he has been separated and set apart to the sacred work of the ministry by prayer and the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery, you are now, dear Sir, to attend to the solemn charge to be given you in the name of the great Head of the Church.

Keep it in your constant remembrance that you watch for souls as one that must give an account.

Preach the word. Be instant in season and out of season. Let it be your fixed determination that you will preach Christ and Him crucified. Shun not to declare the whole counsel of God; testify repentance towards God, and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as absolutely necessary to obtain the forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them who are sanctified.

Amuse not your hearers with speculations which tend rather to strife than to godly edifying. Make the Holy Scriptures the standard of your Creed, as well as the rule of your life.

Use great plainness of speech, and not high sounding words above the understanding of common hearers. Five words that can be understood, are better than five thousand in an unknown tongue. Let not the fear of man prove a snare to you, so as to hinder you from preaching what in your conscience you are convinced is truth. Warn the wicked, hold not your peace, but cry aloud to shew unto your people their transgressions. Testify unto them, that if they walk

after the flesh, they must perish. See to it, that thou be free from the blood of all men.

You must be apprized that example has great influence. Be thou an example to the flock, an example even to believers: then if your people see you are what you preach, if they see you exemplifying your doctrines by an holy life, it will give peculiar weight and force to your preaching.

In such a world as this, where there are so many opinions, and where there is so much corruption and opposition to the humbling doctrines of the Gospel, you will need the wisdom of the serpent as well as the innocence of the dove, yea, and the boldness of the lion.

Be thou then strong in the grace which is in Christ Jesus. Be thou a man of prayer, that from the head of all influences you may derive grace and wisdom to discharge with assiduity and fidelity the duties of the ministry.

Prudence is an essential qualification for a minister; for without it, you will be in danger of having your good evilly spoken of, and your plans for promoting religion frustrated.

Having so long been an instructor in the University in which you was educated, it is to be presumed that you have acquired a good degree of the knowledge of mankind, and of the art of government; do thou therefore see that you rule the house of God with discretion, doing nothing by partiality. Reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long-suffering and doctrine.

Be diligent to know the state of thy flock, and bear them daily upon your heart at the throne of grace. Be not backward to introduce religious conversation in your pastoral visits; many serious people know not

how to begin it, and are highly gratified if their minister leads the way: much good may result from it. Your character will be in danger of sinking in the estimation of serious people, if they hear nothing spoken of religion but in the pulpit. By free conversation with your people you will be like to know their state, and better how to adapt your discourses, whether for quickening, instructing, or comforting.

You are entering into the labors of one who has long been faithfully preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ. You will treat him as a Father, and pay every attention to him, administering consolations under his bodily weaknesses and infirmities, while he is patiently waiting for his discharge, and to receive his reward.

This flock of God, who are to seek the law at your mouth, you will feed with wisdom and knowledge.

Feed the sheep, feed the lambs. Upon the rising generation much is depending.

Administer gospel ordinances to the qualified subjects, and bless the people in the name of the Lord.

As you have equal power with us to ordain others, remember the apostolic direction—lay hands suddenly on no man; be not a partaker with other men's sins; keep thyself pure.

As you would wish to be a scribe well instructed to the kingdom of heaven, bringing out of your treasure, things new and old, give thyself to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine; meditate on these things, give thyself wholly to them, that thy profiting may appear unto all. Take heed to thyself and to thy doctrines; for in doing this, thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee.

To close in the solemn words of St. Paul, whose we have chiefly used, I give thee charge in the sight of

God who quickeneth all things, and before Jesus Christ, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukable until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which in his time he shall shew who is the blessed and only potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man hath seen nor can see; to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen.

RIGHT HAND OF FELLOWSHIP,

BY THE REV. MR. WELLINGTON, OF TEMPLETON.

AMONG the visible works of creation, there is a wonderful accordance, as well as magnificence and beauty. As the several parts of the natural kingdom are united and preserved in harmonious order by one common law, so the several parts or members of the christian kingdom should be in concert and held in exact agreement by the grand connecting principle of love.

The spirit of candor and good will ought not only to be diffused among the members of the same church, but to be exercised by one church toward another, as the common bond of union. Highly important and necessary is it that a good understanding and a spirit of unanimity exist between christian pastors and teachers. Ministers, connected by the same offices or callings, by the same duties, by the same hopes, ought to be united in the bonds of love. On such an union their own mutual comfort, edification and success, in a great measure, depend; not only these, but the cause of Christianity itself. Alas, dear Sir, you would not stand here, this day, in the character you sustain, did you not look for the exercise of that charity in us, which it would be criminal and unchristian in those, whose offices, duties and privileges are the same, to withhold from each other. When Paul was called to be an Apostle, and to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, the other Apostles, seeing the grace that was in him, gave to him the right-hand of fellowship. This day, are you invested with the authority, with all the

powers, privileges and honors, that appertain to the ministerial office; and as an encouragement to the duties of your office, you have a claim to our countenance, our candor and assistance. As an acknowledgment of your character and authority as a minister of Christ, and as a pledge of our affection and charity, of our readiness to counsel, assist and comfort you, as occasion may require, in the name of the ordaining Council, I now present you the Right Hand. Receive, my Brother, not doubting the sincerity and affection, with which it is given. By this, we recognize you as a brother; by this, we salute you as a fellow-laborer in the vineyard of our Master; by this, we welcome you as a partaker of the same ministry, which we have received of the Lord Jesus. While you rejoice in the success of your labors, we will rejoice with you. You will doubtless meet many discouragements and trials. But let our right hands forget their cunning; and let our tongues cleave to the roof of our mouths, if we forget thee, if we do not remember thee in thy sorrows.

We congratulate you, Brother, on the harmony and unanimity, that exist among this people on this occasion. Our hearts desire and prayer is, that by a christian conversation and deportment, by your fidelity to them, and to their children, by the interest you may take in their joys and sorrows, you may strengthen their union, that you may long deserve and enjoy their united affection and esteem.

As you are now regularly inducted into the ministerial office, we trust, that in you, we have the affection of a brother. Do we in very deed behold a brother in thee? Then give me thine hand. Trusting that your heart is ready to respond to the sentiments of our hearts, we bid you God speed. God grant you a long,

a happy, a successful ministry, and finally a triumphant entrance, with your flock, into the New-Jerusalem, and an exalted station in the kingdom of glory.

Christian brethren, and friends of this religious Society, on this auspicious day, receive our congratulations. This day is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ causing joy and gladness to be found among you, thanksgiving and the voice of melody. We congratulate you, that, by a merciful disposition of divine Providence, you have been directed with so great a degree of unanimity and harmony, in your choice of another Pastor, to one, in whose ministerial qualifications, we think, you may confide. Behold the man of your choice, esteem him very highly in love for his work sake, and contribute to his comfort, his happiness and support. By presenting this man the right hand, we have not only acknowledged him as your Pastor and our brother, but you as a regular christian body, in fellowship with the churches of Christ. As such, may the benediction of Almighty God rest upon you. God bless you out of Zion. May the connexion, which has this day taken place between you and your colleague Pastor, contribute to the divine glory, to your own mutual edification and comfort, and to the present and future happiness of your children. Long may you experience "how good, and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity." May we and your venerable Pastor, and colleague Pastor, may you and our respective flocks at last be permitted to meet in yonder world, to participate its felicities, and to swell the triumphs of redeeming GRACE. Amen.

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